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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, NEA/PI, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA,
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LONDON FOR TSOU
PARIS FOR ZEYA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO KDEM PGOV KU MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION - ELECTIONS: CORRUPTION, U.S.
INFLUENCE, WOMEN IN THE PARLIAMENT, ELECTION INTEGRITY

Block Quotes

Tuesday, June 20, 2006

-- Under the headline "Contemplations on Election Day," columnist
Mr. Nabeel Al-Fadhel wrote in the conservative Arabic daily
Al-Watan: "Everyone is talking about corruption in this election. We
have no doubt that corruption is a wide spread phenomenon; we are
actually supportive of every effort to combat this infection.
Nevertheless, our sympathy and support are limited to the new
candidates. As for the former MP's who are seeking re-election, we
have no respect for their calls to fight corruption. These former
MP's who are making noise today about how corruption has infected
the public sector are either stupid or cowards. They are stupid if
they have just found out that corruption does in fact exist in our
society. But, if they did know about it, then they are cowards
because they did not do anything about it when they were in office
during their last parliamentary term. The fact that the majority of
talk about corruption is coming from former MP's is an indication of
what we should expect if they were re-elected."

-- Fouad Al-Hashem sarcastically commented in his daily column in
conservative Al-Watan, "If it wasn't for U.S. pressures under the
leadership of President Bush, may God bless him and keep him as the
warrior of Arab and Muslim nations, we would not have seen the
photos of candidates' wives, which have been used for the first time
during this election."

-- Independent Arabic daily Al-Rai Al-Aam published an Op-Ed by Dr.
Wa'el Al-Hassawi, former Editor-in-Chief of Al-Forqan magazine,
under the headline Al-Saadoun Forum. Dr. Al-Hassawi criticized,
"The forum was almost a political declaration that would precede a
coup. I have a few things that I want to say about this forum:
first, the relationship between the people and their ruler should
not exceed the limit of counseling, advising, and praying for God to
lead him on the right path. Charging other people's emotion against
the ruler has it negative consequences that may not become visible
in the near future; second, no two people can disagree on the fact
that corruption exists in our public sector, or on the need for
reform and restructuring of our election system; however, we must
not forget that we were the ones who voted for these corruptors in
the last election. Third, most people at the forum spoke about how
young men and women who are eager to make a difference are the ones
leading the movement of reform and change. This is a sign that
reform is coming no doubt, but former MP's should not claim that
they were the ones who instigated these changes."

-- In an opinion column carrying the headline "We Want It -Joint

Efforts" Dr. Tariq Idrease, a media consultant, opined in Arabic pro-government daily Al-Seyassah, "During this period when we are working with a new press and publication law, and during an election campaign that has become increasingly competitive with the deadline of June 29 fast approaching, we are calling for the freedom that is protected by our constitution. Let our democracy speak out and let the people decide in the end. We are calling upon everyone to let Kuwait appear to the whole world as we have always known it to be; a free and democratic country."

-- Former minister and columnist Dr. Ali Al-Baghli wrote under the headline "MP's and Tribulation" in the moderate Arabic daily Al-Qabas, "I wish for more than one woman to win seats in the Parliament at the end of this election. Women deserve to be there, and they can do a better job than men. Men have occupied seats in the Parliament for decades, and were unable to bring about new changes. Why not give women a chance? They are capable of giving us a democratic boost."

-- Mr. Ahmed Al-Saraf echoed Dr. Al-Baghli's position in a column in Al-Qabas that carried the headline "Let Us Bring the Desired Change," where he said, "Let it be known that I am only going to vote for women in this election. And I call upon all my friends and relatives to follow my example. I am for bringing a change to the parliament and the composition of our legislative assembly. In the last thirty years only a few men in the parliament were able to maintain their political integrity, and serve their country with honesty. Women psychologically and physiologically are better equipped to do their job with honesty and integrity."

-- Dr. Sajid Al-Abdaly, a political activist and columnist in the moderate Arabic daily Al-Rai Al-Aam responded to the Minister of Interior comments on the integrity of the election. In his article, which was headlined "The Honesty and Control of Elections" Dr.

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Abdaly responded, "Under these exceptional circumstances when we are experiencing an election that was announced suddenly and prematurely, and when the government appears unprepared to deal with the vast number of female participants, and with the mounting evidence of political financing and vote buying, we think it is logical and objective to have neutral committees observe and supervise this election. If the government claims that the election is accomplished in an honest and transparent environment, let them prove it."

TUELLER